

### There is no success without hardship

Mr. Duraj Khan is a forward-thinking farmer, who lives in Village Mera, UC Kuza Banda. He is 58 years old and cultivates vegetables on a small-scale on his approximately 4 kanals of agricultural property for his family and to some extent for sale. His daughter is married and two boys are studying at a public university. He is also a prominent social activist in his community and is well-known among his peers as a compassionate social worker who supports the less fortunate. Despite his poor financial situation, he is compassionate and willing to help others. He had previously worked in Gulf nations as a competent laborer, but his pay was



Mr. Duraj Khan attending 10 days training on mushroom farming organized by CUP

insufficient to provide a comfortable lifestyle for his family. His main focus remained on his children's education and so he succeeded. When CUP-KNH intervention started in the area, he offered his services as a volunteer, and soon he got involved in all the activities carried out under the CUP-KNH project. He helped the project team in establishing CGs, VOs, and DMC. He later became president of the LSO UC Kuza Banda also. When the CUP project team discussed skills training in the trades such as off-season vegetable and mushroom farming, he took a great interest in learning both the trades. However, he was more interested in getting skills training in mushroom farming.

In his own words, *"Mushroom farming has been introduced by CUP for the first time in our region. For poor communities like us, mushrooms are a highly nutritious source of food. We only find mushrooms during the monsoon period, when they grow due to damp conditions by themselves. Our area is also bestowed with one of the most expensive and valuable forms of wild mushrooms called "Wild Morel" or "Guchai" in the local language. But due to the negligence and uncontrolled system by the Forest and NTFP departments, it has almost become extinct. When I heard CUP was offering skill training in mushroom farming, I was more than glad to take part in the training."*

The COVID-19 affected Duraj's family badly, and it played a vital role in diminishing people's income generation sources and buying capacities. The aftermath of the pandemic influenced his family to such an extent that he could not earn sufficient bread and butter for his whole family.

He was very happy when he received 10 days of skill training in Mushroom farming with enterprise development training and tools. His passion for farming resulted in a successful ending. He skillfully established the farm in his backyard shed and took great care to get good produce. The CUP livelihood officer closely monitored the progress of his farm and provided technical inputs when required. The spawn was provided for the cultivation of twenty-five 5 kg bags. It was a spectacle to see all the bags producing such a huge number of mushrooms.



*Lecture by Technical Expert on mushroom farming*

He was able to generate more than 100 kg of mushrooms over a 25-day span. It became a model farm thanks to its enormous success. In addition to using 80 kg for himself, he also sold it in the neighborhood market. In less than a week, he made Rs. 32,000. The production capacity has now been enhanced by Duraj Khan, who has boosted his output to 250 kg. His main clients are from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. He has now developed a model farm and offers willing farmers in his area free technological inputs. His net income is significantly influenced by the money he makes from growing mushrooms. He is now able to pay for his sons' education expenses, who will shortly enroll at a local university for higher education.



*Mushroom farm established by Mr. Duraj Khan*

He expressed his good wishes for CUP-KNH and said, *"I have great belief in good will and helping the needy ones. I think it is the only way to progress and poverty alleviation. We are all so grateful to CUP-KNH, who hves won the hearts of our communities. CUP-KNH has provided skill trainings and assets to technical capacity building initiatives in establishing well-organized community institutions, developing individual human resources and their capacities, and enabling women to earn for themselves, now it is up to our people to sustain these community institutions and take full advantage of the assistance being provided by CUP and KNH."*